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AUTHOR Glossop, Robert
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ABSTRACT

Discussed are characteristics of the modern Canadian family and the social context within which the issues of adolescent pregnancy and adolescent sexuality arise. Various options for families and related ambivalent attitudes toward such personal freedoms are described. The historical evolution of western industrialized society is briefly sketched, and influences of urbanization and industrialization on the family are traced. The machine is seen as the model of Canadian society, and problems resulting from "machine-like" social structures are delineated. Extensive attention is given to problems of children and adolescents. Additionally, historical changes in the social conditions of and influences on children are indicated. Contemporary children and adolescents are depicted as aliens within their own culture, as frequently living in an artificial and unreal world, and as excluded from responsibilities and confined to playing games such as "recreational sex" in their quest for identity. Statistical data about teenage pregnancies are reviewed, and problems in interpreting the facts are discussed. The "teenage pregnancy epidemic" is viewed as a problem resulting from teenagers' keeping their babies. Consequences of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing for mothers and children are pointed out. Concluding remarks focus on the difficulty of reducing the incidence of adolescent pregnancy. (RH)

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THE GAMES CHILDREN PLAY

by

Robert Glossop, Ph.D.
Vanier Institute of the Family
Ottawa

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Keynote address to the Quebec Home Economics Association at the Conference on Values in the Changing Family: Adolescent Sexuality on March 15, 1982 in Montreal, Quebec.

Dr. T.R. Morrison, President
William A. Dyson, Executive Director/Directeur général

THE GAMES CHILDREN PLAY

There is an unwritten rule among those who speak in public. That rule says that one should never begin a speech by apologizing to one's audience nor by confessing to one's limitations with respect to the topic he is about to address. In this instance, I must throw caution to the wind. I can claim no special expertise when it comes to the topic of adolescent pregnancy. To be sure, over the past month or so, I have sampled rather extensively the research literature about the topic. The literature leaves me with one distinct impression: as someone once remarked, "Reality is a nice place to visit but I wouldn't want to live there." I fully expect and look forward to learning at least as much today as I might contribute. Not only do I hope to learn from the other invited guests and discussion leaders, but, from everyone here who deals, on a daily basis, with adolescents and is in touch with their reality.

If I understand correctly, it is the hope of the conference organizers that I might provide a background describing where family is at today and, in this way, share with you my understanding of the societal context within which the issues of adolescent pregnancy and adolescent sexuality arise. At this point, I am reminded of a story about a man who, while walking along a river bank, saw a person drowning in the river. He went to the person's rescue. Having resuscitated the victim, he walked on until he saw two people struggling in the water. He managed to pull both of them to safety. Still further down the river, he saw three others going under. While pulling them to shore, he looked up and saw another man

running very fast along the river bank. He shouted: "Aren't you going to help me save these souls?" "I am," came the reply. "I'm running upstream to see why all these people are falling in the river."

Like the first rescuer, most of us are immersed in day-to-day problems. We find it difficult enough keeping our own heads above water much less reserving the energy required to travel upstream in search of the source of our problems.

So. Onwards, upstream.

I am a member of a rather small minority although it may not be immediately apparent to you. My wife, Margaret, and I have two children. She primarily devotes her time and energies to raising and caring for Emily and Owen while I go to work. To complete the picture, we have a cat. In other words, I am one of those who, along with only 7% of the population of North America, lives today in a family that actually looks like the classic image of family most of us grew up with. Breadwinner father, homemaker mother and two, at least thus far, seemingly well-adjusted kids. Ozzie and Harriet, Father Knows Best, whatever your favourite T.V. show of the 1950's was.

Although dramatic, the 7% statistic is misleading because it does not include those single-breadwinner nuclear families with one child or with three, four or more. If we add these to the total, we learn that approximately 13% of people live in this kind of single-breadwinner family

at any one time. Of course, it is true that many others have lived in this kind of family at one point in their lives.

The largest number of persons, about a quarter of the population, are those who live together with another person without children. These include those who have not yet had children, those who have chosen not to have children, those who cannot have children and do not choose to adopt, and those whose children no longer live at home. There has been, over the past ten years, a rapid increase in the number of single-parent families. 10% of Canada's families are single-parent families. The vast majority of these are headed by women and over 60% of these experience severe economic disadvantages. A little more than 10% of Canada's children are now living in a single-parent family. It has been estimated that more than 40% of children will have lived in a single-parent family for some period of time before they are 18 years old.

In the recent past, the most rapidly growing segment of the population are those who are members of dual-breadwinner or dual wage-earning families. Another dramatic increase is among those who live alone. Buried somewhere in these statistics are the so-called reconstituted or recombined families brought about when previously divorced adults remarry thereby creating with their new spouses and their children a modern and complex form of an extended family - 3 grandparents and God knows how many aunts and uncles, stepbrothers, half-sisters and cousins.

With all this, Statistics Canada informs us that "marriage is more popular than ever." It's so popular, it seems, that many people marry

more than once. Nine out of every 10 adults will marry at least once and perhaps a quarter of these will subsequently divorce if current trends remain the same. Families today are smaller than they were in the past and they are more homogeneous. In the past, the comings and goings of relatives, boarders, lodgers, and strangers as well as siblings who were much older and much younger provided a more varied environment and a greater experience of and contact with people in different life stages.

One can go on and on quoting these statistics and trying to figure out what they mean and what they do not mean. I do not want to prolong the exercise any further. The bottom line seems to be that anyone who still holds on to the simple image of the family as a father who brings home the bacon, a mother who cooks it and their one or two children is badly out-of-touch with reality. They are out-of-touch with the varied and diverse ways that people today are trying to find for themselves close, supportive, intimate and committed familial relationships. Erica Jong has reviewed Betty Friedan's recent criticism of the feminist movement that she, more than anyone else, initiated. In her book, The Second Stage, Friedan challenges those who have followed her to now revise their agenda for change and to redefine their preoccupations. In her review of this work, Erica Jong says this:

> With figures such as these, what on earth is the pro-family coalition (the moral majority) talking about?
>
> Clearly, they are talking about our vanished dreams of a storybook family in which Mom bakes, Spot runs, Dick and Jane play, and Dad comes home at 6 p.m. Similarly, many feminists have been reacting against that vanished dream. But, ironically, what both the right-wing nostalgia-mongers and the feminist extremists have in common is that they are both fulminating about something that no longer exists. (1)

Reader's Digest is not known as a radical or avant-garde publication. Yet, in announcing a new publication entitled Families, they acknowledged the diversity of contemporary family forms in this way:

Today's family is, (they said):

- Mom, dad and 1.8 kids;
- A couple with three kids: one his, one hers and one theirs;
- A 26 year old single secretary and her adopted son;
- A couple sharing everything but a marriage licence;
- A divorced woman and her stepdaughter;
- A retired couple raising their grandson;
- All of the above.

To this list, for today's purposes, we might add:

- A 16 year old girl living at home with her parents and her daughter.

Things, it seems, are not as neat, as tidy nor as predictable as they once were nor as we believe they once were. We have, as a culture, secured for ourselves, over the past fifteen or twenty years, a considerable degree of choice and freedom to live lives according to our own intentions and our own more individually chosen values. We can now choose, without the threat of excessive pressure, social stigma or penalties, to remain single. If we choose not to live alone, we may choose to marry. Having married, we can also choose more easily to dissolve our marriages. We can choose to have children or to be without children. We can choose to have children outside of marriage. Women can now choose, whether or not they have children of a dependent age, to work outside of the home on a more equal (if not yet fully equitable) footing with men. We have the choice to decide, upon pregnancy, whether or not to bear that child. We have the

choice to bear and to keep those children who only 15 years ago would have been labelled as "unwanted."

Without doubt, we cannot make these choices without facing certain consequences. There are still, most certainly, restraints we confront. But, as a society, we have become, if we look at it positively, more accepting and more tolerant of diversity. There are some, I suppose, who would suggest, more pessimistically, that we have simply become more apathetic and don't give enough of a damn to make our own convictions and beliefs known. Either way, we cannot forget that acceptance is not the same thing as approval and support. We should not, therefore, underestimate the extent to which the exercise of choice is often accompanied by negative implications. I will return to some of these as they pertain to adolescent mothers and their children later.

I do not think that many people would want to relinquish the freedoms we now have. Indeed, many of us here have probably, in a variety of ways, argued for, advocated and fought for changes in our laws, curricula, social policies and values in order to make some of these choices real and realistic; realistic in the sense of being able to choose among these options without undue hardships.

Yet, there is, I believe, a certain sense of ambivalence, a sense of uncertainty, that we feel as we begin to see the responsibilities we must now assume in light of these choices and as we recognize that, as a people, we are ill-prepared for the exercise of responsibility. Uncertain

of our strengths, in this regard, we are even more ambivalent when the freedoms we have secured for ourselves are exercised by our children. Indeed, we may with our relative maturity and greater appreciation of the consequences of our actions feel that, for us, the choices are not even real for we recognize too clearly some of the costs involved. Along with our anxieties for our children, we may even secretly envy them for what may be the foolish, yet, somehow strangely attractive innocence with which they seem to exercise, with relative abandon, their freedom from the restraints with which we grew up. I'll mention but one example of how this ambivalence has recently been expressed.

We are all well aware of the immense significance of the introduction, in this century, of the modern technologies of contraception. We have, for the first time in human history, broken the previous necessary connection between sex and conception. On the one hand, I have noted an increasing uneasiness about the side-effects of nearly all of the modern techniques of contraception. We begin to recognize that many of these techniques that promised sex without consequences are not as benign as originally thought and carry their own consequences. But more interesting and surprising than our ambivalence about the technologies themselves is the suggestion recently voiced by women, both within and outside the feminist movement, that the liberation of women from the hitherto inevitable link between sex and conception has created a pervasive sexual climate of attitudes and expectations from the which they cannot now escape. It is suggested that women have now become subject to the technological imperative. If we can do something, we must do it and there is no saying No.

To understand the source of our ambivalence, we need an historical perspective. We have, in a relatively short period of history, become an extremely individualistic and self-centred society. The major trend over the past two centuries in Western industrialized societies has been a trend away from close ties with members of our extended families, friends, neighbours, members of a community. We need not be naively romantic or nostalgic about the past to recognize that we have become more isolated and alone. We can certainly recognize the extent to which traditional communities were often oppressive of the individual person. Nevertheless, despite the drawbacks, there was in the past a sense of certainty, security and direction that was based in the mutual dependencies and close ties maintained with others. Indeed, privacy, as we use the term, was not known by the vast majority of persons nor was it highly valued by them.

By the 19th century, the two generation family of parents and their children, separated both geographically and psychologically from relatives and neighbours, was becoming firmly established as both a statistical norm and an evaluative norm; that is, it was quickly becoming the preferred way of life. There is a slight irony here. As the quantities of goods and services we produce and consume has grown, as the bureaucracies we have created have gotten bigger and more complex, as family businesses have grown into corporations and then into multinational corporations, as nearly everything around us has gotten bigger, the family has grown smaller and more disconnected from the world beyond the front door. It has become isolated, fragile and vulnerable, an "overloaded fuse" as Harvey Cox once called it.

Today, there are more people choosing to live alone, more single-parent families, more intentionally childless couples, more divorces and separations, so that we now seem to continue in a process of reducing the number and duration of our emotional attachments to others. Many once naively thought of family as a refuge from a hostile world beyond its boundaries, a place to retreat to. It now seems that many seek refuge from family, its relationships and responsibilities. Equally, when we are within our families, we often seem to withdraw from our relationships into our work, into our excessively-individualized leisure-time activities, into television which ironically finds its way into the family room, or into a narcissistic fascination with our individual potentials for self-fulfillment. In the name of self-fulfillment, the marriage partnership has been reduced, for some, to the equivalent of a nonbinding or contractually limited commitment, virtually indistinguishable from any other business-like relationship based on self-interest.

With the steady evolution of industrial societies came urbanization: masses of people together from which we withdraw in order to maintain a sense of our uniqueness and anonymity. Similarly, geographical mobility proved a must as workers were to go where the jobs were thereby severing ties to relatives, neighbours and friends and eventually leading to the recognition that such ties are painful in the long-run and, accordingly, to appropriate psychological defences against such ties. The telephone may, indeed, be the next best thing to being there but it is a pale replica of the real thing.

With industrialization, patterns of economic activity changed dramatically away from cooperation and interdependence toward highly individualized competition for wages or profits in the market place.

Industrialism and the logic of the market place was built upon individualism on the assumption that the system works best only if each participant pursues his or her own self-interest. As the system evolved, it forced upon us choices between the well-being of our families and communities, the well-being of our relationships, and individual fulfillment; the system tilted the balance toward the latter.

These comments are no more than gross generalizations. I hope they are simplifying and not merely simplistic. These characteristics of industrialized societies are those most often noted. At a more fundamental level, they reflect a way of thinking and a way of organizing ourselves. The age of industrialization is the age of machines. Machines are made up of many individual, discrete and disconnected parts. These parts are standardized and interchangeable and each has its own specific role or function to fulfill. When we organize our societies upon the same principles so that the machines of industrial production can run smoothly without human interference, we treat ourselves as people as if we were no more than interchangeable parts, produced in a standardized mould, and expected to carry out our specific role or function. Thus, as the relative material prosperity made it possible, after the Second World War, for many married men to support and sustain their families without their spouse's contribution of labour in the market place, men became "breadwinners", employees with designated and clearly-defined roles in their places of work. Corresponding to his role as breadwinner was her role as "homemaker", equally defined and confining.

We can now return to the question of our ambivalence about the freedoms and responsibilities we now have. I would suggest that responsibility

is a capacity that grows out of our being together with others, out of the interweaving of our personal biographies, out of an appreciation of what has come before us and our hopes for what may come after, out of our shared experiences with others from which we may develop a sense of empathy that can extend beyond our personal relationships to the situations of others who are distant from us. Responsibility is a capacity that grows out of our being together with others whom we recognize as persons, complex, many-faceted, whole and unique. It does not grow out of a being together with role occupants.

What I conclude from the above remarks is that the kind of society we have shaped for ourselves is a society ordered as though it were a machine and we its component parts. It is a society which affirms our self-interest if not our individuality and uniqueness; a society that draws us apart from one another; a society that categorizes us by reference to a limited number of our human attributes, fragments us one from another and confines us in exercising our responsibilities for we are assured that beyond our own special place in the machine, there is someone else who will deal with that problem.

This, then, is a portrait, perhaps better a caricature, of the world we are part of, young and old alike. It is a world that makes commitment to others difficult and, for that reason, spawns a frenetic search for intimacy and meaning in an essentially hostile environment. Youth may react to these circumstances in its own unique and youthful way: "sex and drugs and rock and roll" as a punk band recently put it. But, lest we be tempted to over-hasty moralistic judgments about our children, we should remember that as adults we frequently react and cope in our own unique and mature ways:

alcohol, drugs, affairs, absenteeism, racial prejudice, consumer self-aggradizement and the like.

But, we are not here today to talk about adults. So, what is the situation of youth? As I have said, in our machine-like society, everyone has a place, a role to fill, a purpose to serve. Well, perhaps not everyone. There was a time when children were regarded as economic assets; they were, for past generations, and still are, within many cultures, the equivalents of the Canada Pension Plan and the modern social security system. From an early age, they contributed (sometimes in a fashion appropriate to their abilities and, at other times, in a way that exploited their capacities) to the economy. By the way, the word, "economy", actually means the ordering of the home. The point is that they were involved in the real business of living. Today, we are reminded not infrequently how children are a hindrance to chosen lifestyles and that each one will cost up to $200,000 to raise to the age of 18.

The idea of childhood is, perhaps surprisingly, a relatively recent invention, not more than 200 or 300 years old. In the European tradition from which most of us here are descended, prior to the invention of childhood, there were essentially two kinds of people: infants and adults. To be sure, some adults were small and young but they were not understood as distinctly childlike nor youthful. Their wishes and ideas were perhaps not regarded as important and they were likely ignored most of the time. But, they did move with and among adults. They shared the same world. This is not the case today.

Fairly early in the evolution of industrial societies, the exploitation of children and youth was recognized. Furthermore, with the increased productivity generated by industrial processes of production, children along with their mothers became superfluous to the labour market, their material contribution to the market economy, if not to the household economy, no longer required. For the first time, in fact, the threat of unemployment presented itself to humanity along with the need to restrict the size of the potential labour force. At any rate, laws against child labour were enacted. And, schools and compulsory education were born.

This is, you'll remember, occurring at the same time that families were becoming two-generational, smaller and more isolated. With these ties to the community reduced, children (more of whom survived beyond infancy) began to acquire an emotional importance within the family they had not previously had. Children became the center of the isolated intimate circle. And, they were seen as having distinct attributes of innocence, vulnerability and plasticity. These attributes were then to be protected and preserved against the harsh realities and responsibilities of the world outside the family. Without doubt, relative to the previous circumstances within which persons of a young age had lived, these "children," protected from exploitation in the labour force and nurtured as never before, gained much in terms of their physical and psychological well-being, even as their dependency was increased. Yet, along with these advances, came their increasing isolation from the community and the society. Their isolation went hand-in-hand with the increasing isolation of the family, the growing division and specialization of labour, the development of the school system, and the

sharpening competitiveness of market-oriented economics. They were, as such, becoming removed and divorced from active participation and involvement, in a fashion not dissimilar to that of women, from those societal relationships from which a sense of personal worth in the context of human community can arise.

The process of their fragmentation has continued: the duration of their emotional, psychological and economic dependency has increased dramatically, well beyond (as our topic for the day testifies) the age of their biological maturity. For the most part, their days, now increasingly lengthened by extra-curricular activities, extend into years and then decades spent in a highly structured and institutionalized educational milieu made up mostly of their peers and adult supervisors. They are, throughout this process, largely divorced from the human realities of birth, death, caring for others, watching people grow old, working. Their sense of human pain, tragedy, joy, intimacy is more and more shaped by television's surrealistic and artificial treatments of these emotions. Small problems identified and resolved in a 30 minute slot; medium sized human issues in one hour; and, major crises in a 90 minute special.

Children and, even more so, adolescents live essentially in their own world. It is too frequently an artificial and unreal world divorced from the reality they are, we presume, preparing to meet and assume responsibilities within. It is this reality from which they are severely alienated for the simple reason that it is alien to their experience and they are aliens within their culture. They cannot call the real world their home.

As I said, we have defined childhood as having distinctive attributes of innocence, vulnerability and plasticity. We protect these attributes from the encroachments of the outside world. And, we deny to our children the exercise of responsibility in human affairs. And, yet, we are surprised when they fail to act responsibly. We teach our children to compare and to compete: when they grow up intolerant, assertive, aggressive and self-centred, we ask ourselves where we have failed. We segregate people by age and then we complain about the conflict of generations. We institutionalize human activity from the cradle up and we are surprised at our lack of imagination, creativity, spontaneity, at our listlessness, boredom and constant search for stimulation. We seem unable to protect them and ourselves from advertising: we abandon them to T.V. and we are saddened because they are restless, perpetual consumers. We have made of adolescence a kind of no-man's land and then worry about their distance from us. We pamper them, protect them and when at 16, 20, or 22 they fail to bloom spontaneously into hard-working serious citizens, we label them immature and soft.

And, I am afraid that if we are honest with ourselves, we will recognize that the cult of youth so pervasive in our culture, the glorification of childhood and adolescence by we, the adults, is but a reflection of our own frustrations with the responsibilities that burden us. We see youth as a favoured age, an age devoid of responsibilities for that is what we have made of it. And, our images come back to haunt us and frustrate us still further in the advertising to which, as a society, we now devote $5000 per family per year. And, we ask ourselves why we can't too water ski behind the Labatt's baloon and play water polo on sea-doos.

Denied of the opportunity to genuinely participate in and contribute to the world they will inherit, our children are confined to playing games in a perpetual state of role moratorium looking for an appropriate identity. One such game is the Brooke Shields' game, the sexy kids game, which in a perverse fashion, transforms the natural and legitimate expression of adolescent sensuality and sexuality into a consumer commodity known as recreational sex. It is a sexuality tailored to adult images, complete with adult hang-ups, of an object-oriented sexuality without responsibility, without commitment, without compassion.

A very interesting phenomenon has cropped up in the past few years. When the games they play get out-of-hand, we now offer our children a "taste" of reality. There are more and more examples today of what I would call games of deterrence. In the Scared Straight projects, delinquent adolescents spend a day with prison inmates who, if anything, exaggerate the harshness of prison life to deter them from further misbehaviour. In family life and sex education courses, a board game like monopoly has been introduced to demonstrate that the money you get for passing go without an education is not enough to keep you and your young pregnant wife in the fashion to which you have become accustomed. Or, in a similar vein, kids have been asked to take charge of an uncooked egg for 48 hours to emphasize the unrelenting responsibilities of raising and caring for a child. Certainly, in the present circumstances, there is much value in these games, but, in the end, they remain games testifying to the artificiality of children's experience.

In the few minutes remaining to me, I would like to turn directly to the topic of adolescent pregnancy. I will do so in order to share with you

some sense of the state of confusion I have now reached trying to sort through some of the facts and figures. I will also try to identify some questions we may wish to examine as the evening discussions proceed.

First, I have never encountered a muddier set of statistics. They are, at best, unclear and imprecise. At worst, they are intentionally misleading, open to specious inferences designed to back up pre-defined conclusions. We are told that one in five teenage girls will become pregnant before she leaves high school, that there are 50,000 adolescent pregnancies in Canada each year, 1/3 of which will end in therapeutic abortions. We are told that one girl in 20 between the ages of 12 and 19 will become pregnant each year, that 40% of all teenage girls will become pregnant before they are 20, that 9% of the babies born in Canada are born to teenagers. On the basis of such figures, we are told that there is an epidemic of adolescent pregnancy. The Canadian Home Economics Association shares this view.

These figures do not tell us whether the 1 in 20 who gets pregnant is 12 or 19, whether she is married, whether more kids get pregnant today than, say 20 years ago or whether 100 years ago teenagers were customarily parents.

What we do seem to know is that more teenagers are sexually active today than 20 years ago. The overall rate of teenage childbearing has actually declined sharply over the past 20 years even if not quite as sharply as the rate for women over 20 years of age. We know that the only group for whom the rate has increased is girls between the ages of 10 and 14 such that in 1976 there were 1,013 girls of this age that we know about who became

pregnant. We know also that there has been an increase in the use of contraceptives by teenagers, especially by older teenagers. We know also that there has been an increase in the number of out-of-wedlock births to teenagers that result not from an increase in the number of adolescent pregnancies carried to term but from a decrease in the number of shotgun marriages. Even so, 50% of teenage girls who bear children do marry befcre the birth. Perhaps most interesting is the fact that more than 80% of those teenage girls who remain unmarried and give birth to a child now keep their babies whereas 80 to 90% would have given them up for adoption as little as fifteen years ago. We also know that it is no longer as easy to identify a high risk group of adolescents by reference to class, race or family stability as it was in the past. (We can note, however, that the incidence seems to be particularly high among our native populations).

There is, as far as I can tell, no evidence that the problem of adolescent pregnancy is new nor unique to our time. There may well be unique and new problems that now arise as a result of teenage pregnancy and teenage childbearing and the way we, as a society, now deal with the consequences. In the end, I have to agree with Kathleen Rudd Scharf[2] and Maris Vinovskis[3] that the teenage pregnancy epidemic actually turns out, upon analysis, to be a teenage baby-keeping epidemic. It is this trend of unmarried girls to keep their babies that makes us aware of a phenomenon and of the supports they require and the costs of those supports to taxpayers.

Although these figures do not lead easily to firm conclusions nor, much less, to simple prescriptions and solutions, there are some questions

they lead me to ask. First, most unmarried adolescent girls who get pregnant did not want to get pregnant. Why, then, among those who do carry their babies to term, do the majority now choose to keep their babies? In reading a fair bit of the literature about how, as professionals, we should deal with the pregnant adolescent, I note with interest that adoption is hardly ever mentioned; it is certainly not advocated as it was when I was growing up. This represents a huge shift in attitudes and values over a very short period of time. Certainly, as many suggest, there is today a greater acceptance of variations in family lifestyles such that the single parent family is now rightly recognized as a legitimate form of family living deserving of various kinds of support. Others say that the trend of girls to keep their babies can be accounted for by peer pressures exerted upon the girl telling her to keep the baby. But, what is this peer pressure saying? For some of these girls, is the idea of a child perhaps naively seen as a ticket out of dependency and into the real world where decisions are to be made, real responsibilities assumed, control over one's own life and that of another to be exercised? Maybe, maybe not. It's worth considering.

When I was growing up 20 years ago, there were, if I remember correctly, three reasons why adolescent girls gave their children up for adoption. First, shotgun marriages it was believed, with, it seems, good reason, did not last. Second, there was too much shame for parents and daughter to simply acknowledge the pregnancy, bear the child and raise it as "illegitimate." Today, legally, illegitimacy no longer exists. The sense of shame, if it exists at all, is much less; indeed, about half of single adolescent mothers now live at home with their parents. There was,

however, a third reason. It was the reason that, growing up as a boy, was the one most strongly impressed on me. It was simply that if you got a girl pregnant and had to marry her, it would ruin your life. You would have to drop out of school, you would forever be stuck in dead-end jobs, you would be poor, etc. It may be that in the 1950s and 1960s this was principally a male preoccupation, perhaps even a middle-class male preoccupation, for as everyone knew then, girls really didn't have to worry about educations or jobs. I have a hunch that the lack of attention to the part played by males in adolescent pregnancy systematically serves to protect their subsequent opportunities and life chances in the real world.

Although much has changed, adolescent pregnancy and childbearing does still represent a real and significant threat to the life chances, opportunities and expectations of the adolescent girl and her child. It may even be that because the responsibilities and obligations customarily assumed by women in todays' world are significantly different than in the past, the loss of educational opportunities for these girls will prove to be of even more consequence.

There are others here who can speak more authoritatively than I to the consequences of adolescent pregnancy and adolescent childbearing and adolescent parenting for the mothers and their children. Right from the start, we can note that the maternal mortality rate from pregnancy is much higher for teenagers aged 15 to 19 than it is for older women. It is exceptionally high for girls under 14. The infant mortality rate of babies born to younger teenagers is twice that of babies born to mothers over 20. There are a

variety of medical complications associated with teenage childbearing affecting both mother and child. The infants are more likely to be born pre-mature, to be of a low birth weight and to present various neurological abnormalities. Suggestions have been made that the infants of teenage mothers are at a higher risk of being abused and neglected. There are further suggestions that after the initial novelty wears off at around the time of the proverbial "terrible twos", many of these infants will be placed for adoption or taken into foster care. Frequently, although not always, the mother's educational opportunities and chances for stable employment are forsaken leading, for many, to welfare dependency. In British Columbia and Newfoundland, 8 out of 10 girls who become mothers before the age of 18 do not complete high school.

As I say, you are already familiar with all these problems. The bottom line seems to be that trying to raise a child while you're still trying to grow up yourself is not a way of life to be preferred. The single-parent family lifestyle is, indeed, a legitimate and not even an historically new form of family life having been quite prevalent in the 1920s and again just after the Second World War. It is, however, a difficult way to live and bring up children. It is probably more difficult now than in the past given the absence of the extended supports of family, neighbourhood and community to which single mothers turned in the 20s and 50s. It is a difficult way of life for a professional woman with advantages. It is immensely difficult for a 15 or 16 year old girl.

There are various ways in which teenage mothers can be supported in their difficult circumstances. There is, I am sure, much more that could

be done. In this regard, the innovative Louise Dean School in Calgary and the Ecole Rosalie Jetté here in Montréal are interesting and promising as attempts to provide supportive and affirming opportunities for adolescent mothers to continue their educations. There is no strong evidence to support the view that the provision of such supports, services and programs will increase the level of sexual activity among the young. There are some that believe that sexual activity among the young can be deterred if the hazards and costs attendant upon it are increased. But, as a U.S. Supreme Court judge has suggested, the same logic would . ve the State show its disapproval of motorcycles by forbidding the use of safety helmets.

I have come to the final section of the outline I have been using to prepare these remarks. Can we reduce it? The question itself is none too precise. What is it we want to reduce? Adolescent sexuality? Adol escent pregnancy? Adolescent childbearing? Adolescent parenting? In the short term, I am, to be honest, not very optimistic that we might reduce any of these significantly. I think, therefore, that in the short-term we will be confined to trying to find more compassionate ameliorative methods to deal with the consequences. In itself, this will be a formidable task in light of the resurgence of right-wing ideologies and moral majoritarian fervour and in light of the competition from other equally-pressing social ills for the finite funds that would be required to better the circumstances of the adolescent mother.

Why do I not think the incidence of adolescent pregnancy can be significantly reduced in the short term? First, although I know there is

considerable debate about this point, I am not yet convinced that adolescent pregnancy is simply a product of ignorance. I am tempted to agree with Catherine Chilman who says:

> Probably, any teenager could tell us that out-of-marriage births are caused by intercourse together with insufficient contraceptive protection, lack of abortion and failure to marry.(4)

And, when you think about it that's really just about all the factual information one needs. I am not underestimating the already demonstrated value of family life education programs and sex education. But, it remains the case that sex is not an intellectual or rational kind of human activity. As Bruno Bettelheim reminds us: "in sex, your body does things over which you have no control." Factual knowledge about reproductive functions, while necessary, is not the same thing as respect for the integrity of one's own body and others. And, certainly, I know that there is much more to contemporary programs in the areas of human sexuality and human relations. But, children and adults can only interpret information about physiology or about values as meaningful, and appropriate it as their own, in terms of their already established knowledge, the stage of their own intellectual and emotional development, and the experiences and reflections upon which they rely.

As I have tried to suggest, the kind of experience available to our children is not conducive to the kind of learning required. That is why I am tempted to think, along with Kathleen Scharf, that even the best and most innovative sex education efforts might reduce the annual teenage pregnancy rate by something like 10%.(5)

Sex education is a continuous process. The most pervasive and likely influential sex education is going on continuously outside of our schools in a sexually charged culture. We should not underestimate the influence of often unspoken indirect messages from which children learn as they observe, on a daily basis, within their families the mundane incidents that make up the sexual climate of their homes. It begins in the way they are diapered and toilet trained and continues as they become accustomed to their family's way of expressing or denying physical contact and affection, norms governing privacy, dressing and undressing, responses to sexually explicit advertising, and the like. These indirect messages may well be ultimately more influential than the direct verbal communication or lack of it about sexuality. Beyond the family, the process of sexual education continues unabated in the mass media, in the peer group, in the society at large which has increasingly come to define social success as sexual success.

What it comes down to, I think, is that the odds are pretty heavily stacked against the chances for success of any efforts confined to one institutional sphere of our society, no matter how well thought out or delivered.

If this is the case, we will be, at least in the foreseeable future, looking for ways to ease the trauma of those girls who do become pregnant and to improve the circumstances of those girls who decide to bear and keep their children. Although the phenomenon of adolescent pregnancy is not new, it is today visible. Traditionally, it was a phenomenon that

hid in the shadows of our culture. We protected ourselves and our children from recognizing the existence of its reality. The "wayward girl" was typically withdrawn from the school or her immediate environment before she started to "show" to return 5 or 6 months later to resume life as though "it" had never happened.

Today, it is no longer so private. We see it and we find ourselves, as we are today, involved with it. Our daughters and sons are not shielded from the reality of adolescent pregnancy and adolescent parenting as once they were. They most likely know of others who have experienced this reality and may now be living with its consequences. One might reasonably hope that such awareness might prove the most effective deterrent. There are, I understand, a few experiments in which adolescent mothers can return to their own schools thereby overcoming, at least in part, their sense of isolation and ostracism from the mainstream of society and allowing them to participate in normal adolescent relationships with their peers. In these experiments, daycare is provided for them, at least in part, by other students. One might even consider extending this idea as a means of responding to the increased needs for daycare of other women and men. It may not be the best example, but it would represent a dramatic shift overturning the traditional segregation and denial of responsibility to our children. As such, it could be an example of how we might begin to transform our societal patterns in general to overcome, for the sake of both our children and ourselves, some of the rigid categories and principles that have separated us from one another.

Such a transformation could lead us toward a society less harsh than our own. We might, then, feel less compelled to protect our children from reality. And, we might be able to consider seriously the idea of bringing them up within reality instead of having to bring them back to it.

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